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TRENDS IN SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE SATELLITES

1. The Soviet leaders are still confronted in Eastern Europe with a basic dilemma largely of their own creation. Moscow, in order to encourage the long-run development of a sounder Soviet-Satellite relationship, has attempted to move away from the rigidity of Stalinist policy and to introduce, in its stead, a policy which would give limited play to strong nationalist sentiments and local peculiarities within the various Satellites. But the forces set in motion by Soviet liberalization, the rapprochement with Tito and, in particular, the Soviet 20th Party Congress, led to a rising ferment which still poses a potential threat to Soviet control of the Satellite area.

2. Prior to the Hungarian revolution and the Polish coup, the Soviet leaders clearly underestimated the strength of forces within the Satellites seeking reform and change. Emphasizing throughout the spring of 1956 the sin of "dogmatism" and the evils of the "cult of personality," Moscow apparently did not recognize or seriously attempt to cope with Satellite ferment until June, when the riots in Poznan (and the Polish regime's unorthodox reaction to them) belatedly demonstrated the dangers in a policy of liberalization. But the

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impact of Moscow's prior irresolution and the resultant confusion among Satellite party elements most loyal to the Soviet Union had already done irreparable damage in the two Satellites where nationalism was strongest and where party factionalism was the most disruptive. Faced with a new and defiant regime in Poland and a popular revolt in Hungary, the USSR wavered, then adopted a policy of accommodation in the former and of repression in the latter.

3. The key to the differing Soviet treatment of Poland and Hungary lay in the USSR's determination to preserve Communist-run states in Eastern Europe that would retain membership in the Soviet Bloc. Moreover, the withdrawal of one Satellite from the socialist camp might have had significant consequences in the other Satellites. When the initial Soviet hope that a new, more liberal Communist regime headed by Nagy would be able to restore order in Hungary proved unrealistic, and Hungary suddenly declared her neutrality, the Soviet leaders felt compelled to intervene the only way they then could, through military action. In Poland, although clearly opposed to the accession of the Gomulka regime, the USSR was confronted with a fait accompli and was unwilling to take the risks involved in a military attempt to unseat the new leadership. Once reassured by Gomulka's promises that Poland would remain in the Bloc, the USSR then adjusted its policies to conform to an undesirable -- but not impossible -- situation.

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4. Frightened by the Hungarian and Polish crises, the USSR now seems determined to go slow in any evolution of its relationships with the Satellites and, above all, to avoid any possible repetition of the Hungarian or even Polish experiences. It has shifted its emphasis away from liberalization and has attempted to combat the influence of those forces -- principally nationalism, anti-Sovietism and national Communism -- which have been responsible for most of the Satellite ferment. The Soviet leaders are convinced that their hegemony over Eastern Europe must be preserved at all costs and are unwilling to grant the Satellites significantly greater independence so long as they remain basically untrustworthy. Major reliance will still be placed on Satellite parties that will subject themselves -- voluntarily, if possible -- to Soviet ideology, Soviet directives concerning foreign and defense policies and Soviet leadership in general.

5. Although the security of the Satellite system is thus uppermost in their minds -- with measures to insure this security given first priority -- the Soviet leaders do not seem to view a return to Stalinist severity and conformity as either necessary or desirable. They appear willing to tolerate certain differences among the Satellites and to tailor their policy to meet varying Satellite requirements. Although badly burned in Hungary and Poland, they

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apparently still believe that if concessions to autonomy are gradually and judiciously meted out, the Satellite peoples will eventually become voluntarily reconciled to a close relationship with the USSR. Some conviction of this sort is probably necessary to provide the Soviet leaders with a basis for hope, since they are not likely to resign themselves to the prospect of stagnation in Eastern Europe. Certainly there has been no attempt to resume economic exploitation of the area and, though there has been renewed emphasis on Bloc solidarity and Soviet leadership, there has been no specific abandonment of the policy of political "relaxation."

6. The orthodox Satellite leaders can anticipate some Soviet economic aid, a measure of perhaps gradually-increasing internal autonomy, occasional grants of recognition and prestige and support for their own power position and party policies. Concerning the latter, each of the top Satellite leaders apparently is secure in his job as long as he can successfully hold party and state together. Czechoslovakia, economically the most successful and politically the most stable of the Satellites, appears to be Moscow's favorite and, as such, may be intended to serve as a model for the others. Czech party leaders have been relatively successful in convincing the Czechoslovak population that economic and political improvements since the death of Stalin should not be jeopardized by precipitate action; thus the population has some stake in the maintenance of the status quo.

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7. Soviet policy toward East Germany, where little liberalization has been attempted and Moscow has just re-endorsed Ulbricht's repressive policies, seems dictated primarily by Soviet concern over the German problem as a whole. Aware of the basic unpopularity of the GDR regime and fearful that any relaxation of its tight controls might promote a popular revolt in this highly sensitive area, the USSR probably feels that it has no alternative but to support the doctrinaire, Stalinist East German regime. Indeed, the Soviet leaders have probably actively encouraged its repressive policies, particularly those which seek to end party dissidence and pressures for internal liberalization. Accordingly, political concessions granted to the other Satellites by the Soviet Union -- and concessions granted within the Satellites by the local regimes -- are not in store in equal measure for East Germany.

8. The reluctant Soviet acceptance of the "new" Poland now appears to be a long-range adjustment rather than a temporary accommodation. The polemical Soviet-Polish exchanges of the late fall and winter and the subversive activities of the Polish Natolin (Stalinist) faction, for example, appear to have largely disappeared. Certainly the Soviet leaders hope for Poland's return to a more orthodox status and they retain a large arsenal of political, economic and military weapons with which to pressure the Polish regime

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or ultimately to destroy it. But the USSR cannot be certain that its pressures will always prove effective or that their injudicious use would not, in fact, boomerang. Moscow must also be concerned over the dangerous influence of the Polish experiment on the remainder of the Bloc and has attempted to offset this by insisting on doctrinal conformity in the other Satellites. It has also sought to minimize Poland's unique status by granting paper concessions to the orthodox Satellites -- such as status of forces agreements -- which parallel some of the genuine privileges obtained by Poland. Nevertheless, the continuation of the Gomulka regime, or a successor with similar precepts, will at a minimum probably prove embarrassing to Moscow and will probably aggravate the USSR's problems in the other Satellites.

9. But so long as Poland remains a loyal member of the Bloc with a brand of socialism which does not stray too far afield, and Polish developments do not prove too serious a disturbing influence in the other Satellites, the USSR will probably be willing to live with the Gomulka regime. Current Soviet policy toward Poland thus represents a calculated risk. Moscow hopes that the risk will diminish with time and that Poland will eventually prove more susceptible to Soviet pressures; it still does not view the risk as sufficiently dangerous to justify the assumption of the much graver one of military action.

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10. A pragmatic approach is also reflected in the Soviet attitude toward Yugoslavia, whose courtship is apparently viewed as sufficiently advantageous to outweigh the possible dangers involved. From a high point in June 1956, Soviet-Yugoslav relations descended to a level of polemics, mutual ill-will and distrust following the Hungarian revolution. But the secret conversations of August 1957 between Khrushchev and Tito indicate that both sides are seriously seeking a new accord. The Soviet party apparently is working for Yugoslav affiliation -- eventually membership -- in the Bloc; the Yugoslavs, for their part, are anxious to end their partial isolation from much of the socialist world in order to serve as a new source of Communist enlightenment for the Bloc. Moscow apparently expects no major adverse reactions in the loyal Satellites and presumably is prepared, for the time being, to accept -- not endorse -- Yugoslav Communism for Yugoslavia. It may also have assured Belgrade that the Satellites are ultimately to assume "equal" status within the Bloc. In exchange, Yugoslavia may have agreed to end direct interference in Satellite affairs and tacitly to acknowledge, for the time being, Soviet domination of the orthodox Satellites. Because such a rapprochement does not resolve the basic doctrinal differences, each party is apt to retain a certain wariness and skepticism when dealing with the other.

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11. The ability of the Soviet Union successfully to handle the increasingly complex issues associated with its presence in Eastern Europe -- at a time when its own internal policies and its relations with Communist China are also changing -- is by no means certain. Popular dissatisfaction, party factionalism, intellectual ferment and chronic economic difficulties all appear to be long-range problems. Varying Chinese, Polish and Yugoslav "roads to socialism," Soviet vacillations and purges, growing contacts with the West -- all combined with the very real popular pressures from within -- will probably continue to stimulate at least a sub rosa movement for reform and change. The current Soviet effort to stifle overt forms of ferment, while simultaneously attempting to control the general movement through limited concessions, may prevent further explosions but does not appear to offer a lasting solution. Should continued ferment appear to be undermining essential Soviet control over the area, pressures in Moscow for a reconsideration of basic policy will probably grow. While some might argue for an acceleration of the liberalization program, others might see in at least partial reversion to the harsh techniques of the Stalin era the best way to assure the integrity of the empire. In the unlikely event of another Hungary, the Soviet leaders would almost certainly decide that the post-Stalin policies had failed and that repression offered the only solution.

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